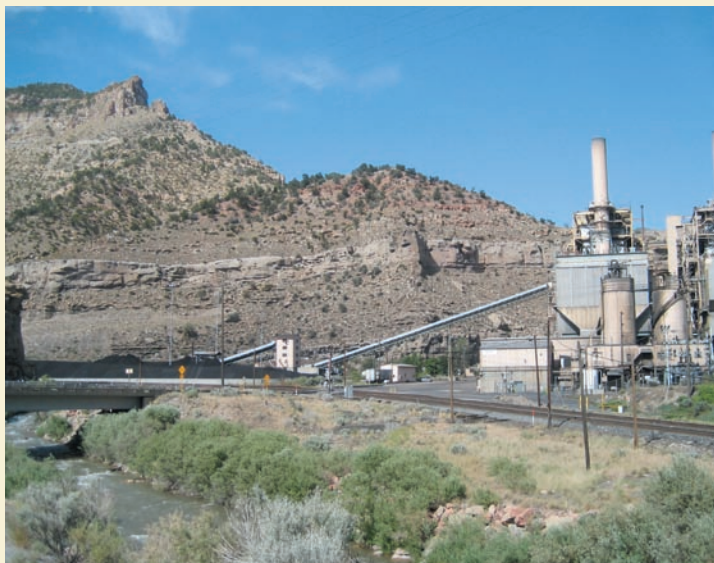


SOUTHEASTERN

Nature's Economic Gift to Utah

By Jacob Moon

At first glance, the desert landscape of the Southeast region of the Beehive State may not illicit thoughts of bounteous harvests. But upon closer inspection, the area's red soil will reveal an area rich with cultural, educational, natural and business opportunities. In fact, of all of Utah's diverse landscapes, perhaps the most well-known are those found in Grand and San Juan counties, having been photographed, filmed and explored by movie directors and producers from around the world. Beyond the fame found in feature films, Southeast Utah—including Carbon, Emery, Grand and San Juan Counties—is an economic machine, with abundant business opportunities all centered around the area's unique natural advantages.



CARBON PLANT

FAST FACTS:

Counties: Carbon, Emery, Grand, San Juan

Major Cities: Price (8,081), Moab (4,807), Blanding (3,135), Huntington (2,062)

Regional Civilian Labor Force: 27,293

Per Capita Income: \$26,913 (Carbon), \$22,080 (Emery), \$24,431 (Grand), \$15,854 (San Juan)

Top Private-Sector Employers: College of Eastern Utah – San Juan, Aramark Services Management, Indian Affairs, The Navaho Nation, Allen Memorial Hospital, National Park Service, Energy West, PacifiCorp, Canyon Fuels Company, Joy Technologies Inc.

Average Price of Homes, Year End 2006:

Carbon/Emery-\$93,986; Grand/San Juan-\$186,617



COLLEGE OF EASTERN UTAH

CARBON COUNTY: FROM COLLEGES TO COAL

Roughly 20,000 people call Carbon County home, making it the most populous of the rural four-county region. Historically, towns like Helper and Price along the winding Utah Highway 6 have been best known for the high-quality coal the nearby mines produced and the hardworking labor force that lived there. Today, the coal-carrying railcars are still a common site as they haul ore through the canyons. Energy continues to be the leading industry for the county, with a majority of the workforce involved either directly or indirectly in mining or oil and gas exploration.

Although national retailers like Wal-Mart and a few fast food restaurants have found their place in these rural towns, Carbon County boasts a strong agricultural, educational and industrial presence. In fact, 21 percent of the county is still considered farm land, and open space for recreation is abundant throughout the region. The College of Eastern Utah in Price is considered the education center of the Southeast Region, offer-

ing 400 courses in 60 areas of study ranging from arts and humanities to business and industry. The Castlevue Hospital in Price joins CEU as the top two employers in the county, each with nearly 500 personnel.

The real beauty of the county is found in the its homegrown success. Local leaders have developed initiatives such as the Business Expansion and Retention program to help existing businesses succeed in their respective fields. Online surveys help government officials identify the areas where local businesses are struggling, such as marketing or human resources, and then organize workshops to help educate local business owners. "Right now our economy couldn't be better," says Delynn Fiedling, director of Carbon Economic Development. "But our focus is to strengthen existing businesses to mitigate the effects of an eventual downturn."

EMERY COUNTY: POWERING THE STATE

Like many of the rural parts of the state, the economy in Emery County

continues the energy and tourism focus. But Emery's economic bragging rights reach statewide, with 90 percent of the electricity the state uses being generated at two power plants within the county. Coal and power generation are the heavy hitters here, says Mike McCandless, economic development director and planner for Emery County, and natural gas has become a bigger player in the past 10 years.

The quiet towns of Castle Dale and Huntington are growing at speeds that have never been seen before, with building permits jumping from five homes to 40 homes per year. Unemployment rates are also hitting record lows, dropping from 13.5 percent in 2003 to 2.1 percent in 2007. The labor market is admittedly tight, McCandless says, but companies are only starting to see it affect wages. In fact, his office's three-year goal is for each existing business in the county to add one more employee, which would increase the labor force by more than 900 people, McCandless says.

While the eastern part of the county is centered around energy and supporting industries, the western city of Green River enjoys a strong tourism base. The town of 700 has almost as many hotel rooms as it does people, McCandless says, most of which are occupied during the area's peak season—late summer and early fall.

Emery County has been primed for economic diversification, and with Green River sitting near Interstate 70, Utah Highway 6 and major rail lines, area officials are hopeful that the area will become a center for energy- and manufacturing-related distribution channels.

GRAND COUNTY: A RECREATION CAPITAL

Although they may not know it, practically everyone who is even somewhat familiar with Utah has been introduced to Grand County. The iconic Delicate Arch that graces memorabilia, knickknacks and the state's centennial license plate is found in this portion of the Southeast Region.

With the Green and Colorado Rivers snaking their way through the

famous red rock, the county has become a veritable Mecca for outdoor enthusiasts. The 8,000-plus people living in the area do so because of the abundant sun and relaxing atmosphere the high-desert beauty provides. It is estimated that 70 percent of the economic activity in Grand County is tourism related.

Located nearly a stone's throw from Arches National Park, Moab serves as both the county seat and the state's recreation capital. Beginning each March with the annual half marathon along the Colorado River, outdoor enthusiasts congregate on the valleys and cliffs of the Moab area from spring to fall. Mountain biking, four-wheeling, hiking, rock climbing, camping, and river rafting are a few of the activities that bring upwards of 6,000 people to Moab each weekend in the spring and fall, says Ken Davy, economic development specialist for Moab City.

"The thing that makes Grand County great is the absolute easy access to virtually any type of outdoor recreation that you want, from cross-country skiing to white water rafting," Davey says. "You can be a gonzo mountain biker or enjoy driving around in your Hummer and find plenty of places to explore here, and you'll do it feeling like you are the only person in the world."

SAN JUAN COUNTY: UTAH'S HOLLYWOOD STAR

Continuing south, San Juan County

maintains the rich heritage and dazzling scenery Utah's deserts are known for. This area is home to several national parks, state parks, natural bridges and Navajo Tribal Parks, including Monument Valley, which was made famous in the John Wayne classic "Stagecoach". In May 2007, the valley was featured in the Red Bull Air Race, in which aerobatic pilots defy the laws of physics in an extreme race just feet above the valley floor.

Until the late 1800s, the area was occupied almost exclusively by the Navajo Indian tribes. The Navajo nation still occupies much of the land today; museums, sacred monuments and even a sewing factory continue to provide much of the area's distinctive culture.

Like much of the Southeastern part of the state, San Juan County's economy has strong ties to tourism, with agriculture and mining also playing a role. With such beautiful attractions as Canyonlands National Park, Lake Powell, Monument Valley and the Four Corners Monument, the county exhibits some of nature's most unique and mesmerizing beauty, attracting tourists and dollars.

Among the major employers in the area are the school district and San Juan Hospital, although the College of Eastern Utah Blanding campus also has a presence. Several small businesses speckle the area, bringing a mix of retail, service, agricultural and industry jobs.

San Juan County is a blend of adventure and mesmerizing landscapes, featuring some of the very best of Utah's Canyon Country.



RED BULL AIR RACE IN MONUMENT VALLEY